

ARTICLE APPROVED
ON PAGE A-17

WASHINGTON POST
26 July 1983

Nick Thimmesch

Doesn't Carter Know Any Better?

Jimmy Carter is a man of many parts who too often shows his perverse side, to his own detriment, and in this case, to the nation's as well.

In Tokyo recently, he did what former presidents and vice presidents should never do when they are out of the country—denounce the current foreign policy of the United States. Carter, bright, earnest and well meaning as he is, did that, and thus showed a characteristic narrowness and lack of class.

Carter charged in a news conference that the Reagan administration's support of El Salvador's government amounted to underwriting a regime that was "the most bloodthirsty in our hemisphere, perhaps in the world."

He also attacked current U.S. trade and defense policies with Japan. And he embarrassed the Canadian government—and therefore ours—by spilling the beans on how CIA agents he sent to Iran during the hostage crisis worked hand-in-hand with Canadian officials.

Doesn't Carter know any better? Doesn't he know that when he appears in the press and broadcast media in Japan, as a former president he is regarded as an emblem of the United States,

and an authoritative voice as well? Doesn't he know that his words are amplified across the world, thus making it even more difficult for whatever administration is in Washington to carry out American policy?

If Carter wants to lambaste the Reagan government, fine, but let him do it on American soil. President Ford had many serious differences with Carter's foreign policies, but when he traveled abroad as an ex-president, he held his tongue in private as well as public. There is no evidence that Richard Nixon, as former vice president and president, violated this unwritten rule either.

Moreover, Carter's characterization of El Salvador's regime as perhaps the most bloodthirsty in the world is foolish no matter where he said it. It is a bit pious for Carter to proclaim, as he did in Japan, that when he was president human rights and democratic reforms were stressed in Central America.

After all, Carter sent \$5 million in emergency aid to the very Salvadoran government he claims has killed up to 35,000 of its own people. The Central American situation is just as vexing for the Reagan government as it was for Carter's. When

Carter was in the White House, he didn't come up with any magic solutions for that troubled region. The trouble in all Latin America, particularly Central America, has been festering for a long time. Reagan inherited it, just as Carter did.

The former president wasn't content to go after the Reagan administration on El Salvador. He also took advantage of Japan's regional concerns by citing a recently negotiated arrangement for the United States to increase arms sales to Taiwan as an example of Reagan's "unprecedented radical departure in foreign policy." Come now, Mr. Former President, isn't that laying it on a bit thick?

And did he have to pander to Japanese self-interest by claiming it is a "mistake" for the U.S. government to ask Japan to increase the defense portion of its budget and to push for different arrangements on trade that would benefit the United States? Tsk, tsk, Carter did this on Japanese television.

Finally, for Carter to rake over the CIA involvement with Canadian officials in Iran might make him look like a big man in Tokyo, but at whose expense?

Up to now, the word was that U.S. intelligence organizations helped the Canadians prepare passports and visas for six Americans sheltered in the Canadian Embassy in Tehran. Carter enriched that report a good deal. He couldn't resist telling correspondents how he sent CIA men in disguise into Tehran to work in the Canadian Embassy on the problem of getting the Americans out.

The Canadian government would like as little said about this episode as possible. Insurgent forces in many countries might immediately conclude that every Canadian embassy houses CIA agents. But Carter can't keep his mouth shut.

He can act peculiarly at times. Carter obviously still feels the hurt of overwhelming defeat and being a one-term president. He must know that the office of the president is bigger than the mortal who occupies it, and that when that mortal departs the White House, he carries much of the aura with him—especially overseas. When former presidents are abroad, they shouldn't knock U.S. foreign policy. It makes a former occupant of that office a bigger person for showing the necessary restraint.

1983, Los Angeles Times Syndicate